

Dear House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing you on this 11th day in May of 2020 to voice my opposition to HB 5679. This proposed bill concerns me as I am on the sex offender registry. For my crime I have served my time, though I am still being punished by being on the sex offender registry. My being on the registry has caused me much hardship.

Currently I am both homeless and receiving SSI. My last housing was over two years ago, a sublet room. When the property manager found out I was on the registry I was evicted.

I can't find affordable housing that will accept registrants. HUD rules prevent me from receiving a section 8 housing voucher. As a point of fact, I didn't choose to be disabled. I would much rather have a job where I would earn far more money than what I receive from SSI (\$783 per month). I have had to accept my limitations, which to say the least has been very humbling.

While I was at the homeless shelter, someone accessed Michigan's sex offender registry website, looked up the shelter's address to find who staying there was on the registry, resulting in crimes being committed against those of us on the registry ranging from verbal harassment, theft, and assault. A perfect example of how the sex offender registry makes society less safe.

Perhaps I am viewing this incorrectly? Is the goal of congress to provide a means for select individuals in society to be targeted as people that it's okay to commit crimes against? No, it's not, as stated in the MCL of the Michigan Sex Offenders Registration Act, in part:

“28.721 Short title.

Sec. 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "sex offenders registration act". History: 1994, Act 295, Eff. Oct. 1, 1995.

28.721a Legislative declarations; determination; intent.

Sec. 1a. The legislature declares that the sex offenders registration act was enacted pursuant to the legislature's exercise of the police power of the state with the intent to better assist law enforcement officers and the people of this state in preventing and protecting against the commission of future criminal sexual acts by convicted sex offenders. The legislature has determined that a person who has been convicted of committing an offense covered by this act poses a potential serious menace and danger to the health, safety, morals, and welfare of the people, and particularly the children, of this state. The registration requirements of this act are intended to provide law enforcement and the people of this state with an appropriate, comprehensive, and effective means to monitor those persons who pose such a potential danger.”

What society and congress must recognize is that the goal of the sex offender registry to keep society safe is not being fulfilled. As such what is the point of this law?

When a person who has committed a crime completes their parole or probation, society has an obligation to allow that person to reintegrate back into society and to also provide them the opportunity to thrive. Provide them with a fair opportunity to demonstrate they are not inclined

to re-offend. To that end we have two options: We can throw obstacles in that person path, or we can help provide opportunity by removing obstacles.

The sex offender registry is a tremendous obstacle.

I would argue that society has an obligation to promote opportunities for re-offenders to become engaged with society, to become invested in a society which treats people with kindness and with respect, thus leading to a safer society. An individual who can afford housing, who can afford to pay their bills, who is afforded opportunity, is less likely to reoffend than someone who is marginalized by society. That said, even with the marginalization of sex offenders over 90% of sex crimes are committed by individuals who are not on the registry.

What I have thus far written may have little to no impact on your thought process. Regardless of my experience and feelings, as a member of the House Judiciary Committee you have an obligation to your constituents to recognize the current climate in criminal justice reform which looks at implementing data/evidence driven policies. There have been numerous studies that conclude that the sex offender registry does not fulfill any of its stated goals. That leads to the logically derived question: “Why we are spending so much time and so many taxpayer dollars trying to keep ineffective policy in place when data driven logic says society does not need a sex offender registry?”

I am asking you, why is this committee wasting time on modifying a law which is proven ineffective? Why should Congress waste their time on legislation that is proven ineffective?

Please take the time to read the attached amicus brief which is a well written essay on how the sex offender registry punishes people while not making society safer.

All this said, I just want to live my life. I do my best to not tread on others, in return I ask that others don't tread on me. Please vote no on HB 5679.

Respectfully,

Philip Champlain